

Community Based Monitoring System for Access to Basic Minimum Services (CBMS)

*Workshop- Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram
4-5 March, 2005*

Introduction

Local governments (Panchayats) have come into being following the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution in 1993. The powers and resources devolved on them have varied across the states of India. Kerala has taken the lead in devolving almost 40% of the plan funds on the Panchayats, taking the position that 'capacity will be built as they learn planning'. Almost ten years have passed and the initial enthusiasm seems to have worn out and there is disenchantment. After the initial mass participation, accountability from below seems to have given way for bureaucratization.

Local governments and decentralized planning is at a turning point. The following issues will have to be addressed to renew the strength of Panchayats. What are the challenges facing the Panchayats? How can the flow of resources from above be linked to achievements in certain spheres? What is the incentive system needed for better utilization of resources? How can capacity for information based decision- making be built? What are the constraints for accessing the information needed for planning? What steps need be taken to build information systems from below?

The Centre for Development Studies (Kerala), and the University of Montreal (Canada), sponsored by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC-Canada) have been working on the development and possible implementation of a community based monitoring system (CBMS) in Kottathara Panchayat, Wayanad since 2002. The CBMS seeks to provide the Gram Panchayat and local communities with a participative and evidence-based information system on access to Basic Minimum Services for needs-based policy formulation and monitoring. Two main processes were devised for development planning and monitoring of public policies.

First, an analysis of the situation with respect to current monitoring practices in the Panchayat was conducted. This encompassed a number of reports and documents that outline local processes and outputs, providing an in-depth understanding of the motivation, abilities, and constraints faced by local government and other actors in putting into place sound, effective, and equitable public policies. These reports include reviews, surveys, analyses of local public programs and systems, and assessments of the political and social context in which decision-making and planning takes place.

Second, an approach was developed in order to develop a series of development profiles. These profiles are comprehensive reports of social and economic characteristics of the population, at individual and household levels. The approach adopted included the systematic collection of information, analysis of data, and dissemination of information to the Panchayat. Discussions were held with the Grama Panchayat to ensure that the most appropriate and relevant indicators were included in the profiles. The profiles were designed to highlight general trends, and disparities that exist within and between the wards of the Panchayat. Using a standardized approach, the profiles compare groups according to their poverty status, caste and tribal affiliation,

and gender in order to assess potential inequalities in needs, resources, and access to basic services and schemes. Seven profiles have been developed; general, poverty, health, access to basic services, gender, tribal welfare, and financial protection of health care.

Objectives

The workshop plans to offer a forum for presenting the perspectives of the state departments, the ground realities as observed by the researchers, processes from below, and some of the challenges facing the Panchayats. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- 1) Share results on monitoring local policies and programs with decision-makers.
- 2) Present the approach developed in Kottathara in the production and communication of specific indicators used in monitoring.
- 3) Elicit ideas, needs, and visions for monitoring public interventions from decision-makers at different levels (state-district- Grama Panchayat).
- 4) Explore options for monitoring, possibly inspired by the approach used in Kottathara, supported by the CDS and University of Montreal.

Participants

The workshop aims to unite policy-makers at state and local levels (e.g. senior administrators involved in local governance, Panchayat presidents), community monitoring experts, foreign partners/donors, academic experts, civil society groups, and the project team.

Expected outcomes

It is hoped that the workshop will increase the awareness for, and stimulate the utilisation of evidence-based approaches for planning and monitoring among decision-makers at all levels of government (local, district, and state). It might help initiate new approaches towards better governance and improved accountability to which government, civil society, and academics can contribute.

Agenda

Friday, 4 March 2005

9:30 to 10:15 : Formal inauguration: **Vice Chairman, State Planning Board**

10:15 to 10:30 : Tea break

10:30 to 1:00: Opening Plenary : “Perspectives on planning and monitoring needs”

Project perspective : Community-based monitoring systems (CBMS)

- * International Development Research Centre, Ottawa on CBMS (10 minutes)
- * D. Narayana and S. Haddad on project approach and main lessons (60 minutes)

Local government perspective: Planning and monitoring in Kottathara

- * Address by President of Kottathara Panchayat (15 minutes)

Senior administrator perspectives: Needs, views, and expectations of planning processes & monitoring

- * **Secretaries- Planning, Local Government, Health, any other?** (4 x 15 minutes)

1:00 to 2:00 Lunch

2:00 to 4:30 : “*Is there an added value of evidence-based planning and monitoring?*”

Presentation : Illustrations from Wayanad (profiles) (45 minutes)

Tea break (15 minutes)

Breakout Session : What should be covered by an information system? (60 minutes)

Plenary : Rapporteur from each working group reports back and group discussion. (30 minutes)

Saturday, 5 March 2005

10:00 to 12:30 : “*What are the challenges to evidence-based planning and monitoring?*”

Presentation : Experiences from Wayanad (Project products)) (45 minutes)

Tea break (15 minutes)

Breakout Session : How to overcome barriers? (60 minutes)

Plenary : Rapporteur from each working group reports back and group discussion. (30 minutes)

12:30 to 1:30 Lunch

1:30 to 3:30: *The way ahead*

Presentation : Summing up by D. Narayana

Discussion:

Presentation : Steps needed to go forward : representative of IDRC